

# Stylistic Influences, Developments, and Pedagogical Considerations of Nikolai Kapustin's Eight Concert Etudes, Op. 40

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## ABSTRACT

The Eight Concert Etudes for Piano, Op. 40 (1984), are considered representative of Kapustin's mature style. The work displays Kapustin's synthesis of classical tradition and jazz styles. Kapustin applied the brilliant virtuosity of great jazz musicians, such as Art Tatum, Erroll Garner and Oscar Peterson. Besides jazz styles and techniques, most of these etudes are written in traditional ABA forms and with romantic virtuosity that can be found in the etudes of Chopin and Liszt. Nowadays, pianists often choose these etudes for competitions since they are securely established in the standard repertoire.

The purpose of this study is to explore the development of the Eight Concert Etudes and their disparate styles, which will promote a deeper understanding of Kapustin's musical vocabulary and interpretation. This research consists of three sections: a summary of the composer's biography as well as background information associated with his music, Kapustin's incorporation of classical tradition and the jazz elements used in Eight Etudes, and also an analysis of the harmony, rhythmic patterns, phrase structures, and forms that have emerged in his etudes. It is obvious that Kapustin has addressed new ideas in his etudes. However, Kapustin's work has only recently become popular outside of Russia and there is limited literature related to his etudes. I hope my work will be valuable to the knowledge of his work as a whole.

## Table of Contents

Acceptance Page .....	ii
ABSTRACT .....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Musical Examples .....	v
List of Tables .....	vi
Introduction.....	1
I. A Biography and Historical Background.....	3
II. Stylistic Influences and Jazz Techniques in the Eight Concert Etudes, Op. 40.....	8
Stylistic Influences.....	9
Jazz Techniques .....	16
III. A Closer Study in Etudes No. 1 and No. 6 of Op. 40 .....	27
Etude No. 1, “Prelude .....	27
Etude No. 6, “Pastoral” .....	33
Conclusion .....	38
Bibliography .....	40

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## List of Musical Examples

Example 2.1 Chopin: Etude Op. 10, No. 7, mm. 14-19 .....	11
Example 2.2 Kapustin: Etude No. 2, Op. 40, mm. 17-18 .....	12
Example 2.3 Rachmaninoff: Prelude Op. 23, No. 9, mm. 3-4 .....	12
Example 2.4 Kapustin: Etude No. 7, Op. 40, mm. 72-73 .....	12
Example 2.5 Chopin: Etude Op. 25, No. 11, mm. 43-46 .....	13
Example 2.6 Kapustin: Etude No. 4, Op. 40, mm. 22-25 .....	14
Example 2.7 Kapustin: Etude No. 8, Op. 40, mm. 105-112 .....	14
Example 2.8 Domenico Scarlatti: Keyboard Sonata in D minor, K. 141, mm. 1-5 .....	15
Example 2.9 Kapustin: Etude No. 3, Op. 40, mm. 7-10 .....	15
Example 2.10 Ravel: <i>Le tombeau de Couperin</i> , Toccata, mm. 173-177 .....	16
Example 2.11 Kapustin: Etude No. 2, Op. 40, mm. 18-19 .....	18
Example 2.12 Kapustin: Etude No. 8, Op. 40, mm. 33-40 .....	19
Example 2.13 Kapustin: Etude No. 1, Op. 40, mm. 12-15 .....	20
Example 2.14 Kapustin: Etude No. 3, Op. 40, mm. 31-34 .....	20
Example 2.15 Kapustin: Etude No. 7, Op. 40, mm. 84-85 .....	22
Example 2.16 Kapustin: Etude No. 8, Op. 40, mm. 93-100 .....	22
Example 2.17 Kapustin: Etude No. 1, Op. 40, mm. 4-9 .....	23
Example 2.18 Kapustin: Etude No. 6, Op. 40, mm. 15-16 .....	23
Example 2.19 Kapustin: Etude No. 7, Op. 40, mm. 1-5 .....	25
Example 2.20 Kapustin: Etude No. 2, Op. 40, mm. 1-3 .....	26
Example 3.1 Kapustin: Etude No. 1, Op. 40, mm. 7-11 .....	29
Example 3.2 Kapustin: Etude No. 1, Op. 40, mm. 12-15 .....	31
Example 3.3 Kapustin: Etude No. 1, Op. 40, mm. 26-29 .....	31
Example 3.4 Kapustin: Etude No. 1, Op. 40, m. 69 .....	33
Example 3.5 Kapustin: Etude No. 6, Op. 40, mm. 1-2 .....	35
Example 3.6 Kapustin: Etude No. 6, Op. 40, mm. 17-20 .....	36

---

Example 3.7 Kapustin: Etude No. 6, Op. 40, mm. 25-28 .....	37
--	----

### **List of Tables**

Table 1. Formal Structure of Kapustin: Etude No. 1, Op. 40 .....	28
Table 2. Formal Structure of Kapustin: Etude No. 6, Op. 40 .....	34

## Introduction

Nikolai Kapustin (born 1937) is a Russian-Ukrainian composer and pianist. He began his musical career as a classical pianist. He studied at Moscow Conservatory with Alexander Goldenweiser, who was regarded as a significant founder of the Russian piano school. However, Kapustin was more fascinated when he first heard jazz at the age of 16, and he realized the significance of jazz. Kapustin's classical training and early interest in jazz enabled him to consider the possibilities of combining classical virtuosity and jazz style together. During his student years, besides composing, Kapustin already performed as a jazz pianist and gained popularity.

Kapustin composed an extensive list of solo piano works, such as twenty piano sonatas, etudes, preludes, variations, 6 piano concerti and others. In the West, almost no one had ever heard Nikolai Kapustin until the end of the twentieth century, when Marc-Andre Hamelin and Steven Osborn recorded his music with Hyperion. Prior to this, Russian pianist Nikolai Petrov's recordings of the Piano Sonata No. 2 and an Intermezzo for piano were the only resources for Western pianists. In addition, as a brilliant pianist himself, Kapustin also made many recordings of his own music. Steven Osborne was the first major pianist from the West to discover Kapustin's music. When Osborne first heard Kapustin's music in a friend's house, he was immediately interested in it:

I was bowled over. I've always loved jazz, and had never heard such a great fusion of jazz and classical styles...normally, the jazz bits feel "grafted on" with

classical composers; or else if it's a jazz musician attempting a fusion, the structure is often pretty weak.<sup>1</sup>

Several dissertations, recordings, and journal articles, have explored Kapustin's work. Martin Anderson (2000) interviewed Kapustin and researched his compositional style, describing it as "an idiomatic and convincing fusion of the language of jazz and the structural discipline of classical music."<sup>2</sup> In 2004, Stuart Isacoff mentioned both the influence of classical training received by Kapustin and the jazz musicians who influenced him, including Art Tatum, Oscar Peterson, and Erroll Garner. Besides articles, a number of doctoral dissertations written by Tatiana Abramova, Randall Creighton, Jonathan Mann, Akane Okamoto, Yana Tyulkova, and Ruby Wang, also discuss stylistic influences and developments of Kapustin's music.<sup>3</sup>

For the sake of further exploring how Kapustin utilizes jazz idioms and classical influences, I will endeavor to explore the stylistic connections between various examples of his piano works. Moreover, the performing process will help me to understand the pedagogical value of Kapustin's music.

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<sup>1</sup> Roberts, Jonathan Eugene. *Classical Jazz: The Life and Musical Innovations of Nikolai Kapustin*. DMA thesis, University of Alabama, 2013, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson, Martin. "Nikolai Kapustin, Russian Composer of Classical Jazz". *Fanfare* 24.1 (2000): 93.

<sup>3</sup> Abramova, Tatiana. *The Synthesis of Jazz and Classical Styles in Three Piano Works of Nikolai Kapustin*. DMA thesis, Temple University, 2014; Creighton, Randall. *A Man of Two Worlds: Classical and Jazz Influences in Nikolai Kapustin's Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 53*. DMA thesis, University of Arizona, 2009; Mann, Jonathan Edward. *Red, White, and Blue Notes: The Symbiotic Music of Nikolai Kapustin*. DMA thesis, University of Cincinnati, 2007; Okamoto, Akane Megumi. *Nikolai Kapustin's Eight Concert Etudes, Op. 40: Reflections on Analysis, Practice, and Performance*. DMA thesis, University of Toronto, 2013; Tyulkova, Yana. *Classical and Jazz Influences in the Music of Nikolai Kapustin: Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 55*. DMA thesis, West Virginia University, 2015; Wang, Ruby. *Fusion of classical virtuosity and jazz techniques in the etudes of Nikolai Kapustin: Eight Concert Etudes, Op. 40 and Five Etudes in Different Intervals, Op. 68*. DMA thesis, University of South Carolina, 2014.



## I. A Biography and Historical Background

Nikolai Girshevich Kapustin was born in Gorlovka, Ukraine on November 22, 1937. During that time, Ukraine belonged to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The first jazz concert took place in the USSR in 1922, which was only fifteen years before Kapustin's birth. The concert was introduced by Valentin Parnakh (1891-1951). Parnakh was also the first person to pronounce the word "jazz" in Russia. He argued that American dance music symbolized the vigor and optimism of post-revolution Russia. In the first jazz concert, the music consisted of popular American tunes with no improvisation.<sup>4</sup> The premiere achieved a huge success.

Although both of Kapustin's parents were non-musicians, his elder sister Fira Kapustin studied violin with Piotr Ivanovich Vinnichenko. Kapustin speculates that perhaps the gramophone records of classical music in the house sparked his interest in the piano.<sup>5</sup> Vinnichenko was surprised by Nikolai's talent since he could play two of Clementi's *6 Progressive Piano Sonatinas*, Op. 36, without formal piano training when he was seven years old, which made Vinnichenko decide to teach Nikolai as well. Then in 1949, when Nikolai was twelve years old, Vinnichenko brought him to study with Lubov' Frantsuzova, a graduate of the St. Petersburg Conservatory. According to Kapustin, his work with Frantsuzova centered primarily around musicality and not so much on technique.<sup>6</sup>

In 1950, with no formal compositional training, Kapustin wrote his first piano sonata. Not having heard jazz, the sonata was in an "academic style," and he did not consider the work

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<sup>4</sup> Mann, Jonathan Edward. *Red, White, and Blue Notes: The Symbiotic Music of Nikolai Kapustin*. DMA thesis, University of Cincinnati, 2007, 24.

<sup>5</sup> Roberts, 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

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“serious.”<sup>7</sup> After studying with Frantsuzova for three years, Kapustin was accepted by the preparatory school associated with the Moscow Conservatory and studied with Avrelian Rubbakh, who he considered his first significant piano teacher. Compared with Frantsuzova, Kapustin thought Rubbakh taught both musical and technical aspects, especially emphasizing sound quality. Rubbakh, Vladimir Horowitz, and Simon Barere all studied with the same teacher, Felix Blumenfeld (1863-1930), and it is worth noting that Alexander Tsfasman (1906-1971), who was regarded as the first jazz pianist in the Soviet Union and the first Russian pianist to make jazz recordings in 1928, was also the pupil of Blumenfeld.

Alexander Tsfasman was another important figure who contributed to Soviet jazz and the leading jazzman during the Stalinist era, whose musical career was similar to Kapustin. Tsfasman started his musical training as a classical pianist as well, and then began his own jazz orchestra. In addition, he also composed a lot of works. Kapustin met him in the 1960s, and then performed Tsfasman’s piano concerto with the Radio Orchestra in the early 1970s. Kapustin explained, “We (pianists) liked Tsfasman for his elegance and easy-going style and his perfect finger technique.”<sup>8</sup> Tsfasman was his mentor, greatly affecting his composition and piano technique.

During the Second World War, jazz musicians were encouraged to perform music to support Soviet soldiers. Playing jazz was not prohibited during the war, mainly because of the alliance between the US and the Soviet Union.<sup>9</sup> However, many jazz musicians were apprehended in Russia between 1945-1953, including Tsfasman. Even instruments associated

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<sup>7</sup> Mann, 28.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>9</sup> Abramova, Tatiana. *The Synthesis of Jazz and Classical Styles in Three Piano Works of Nikolai Kapustin*. DMA thesis, Temple University, 2014, 12.

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with jazz, such as saxophone, were prohibited. 1953 was a decisive year for Kapustin because Stalin died and he first heard the music of Glenn Miller and Louis Armstrong on the radio. He said, “the very first time I heard it. And as soon as I started playing jazz I understood it was something for me. I understood that I had to combine the two musics – I had that idea from my youth.”<sup>10</sup> After Stalin’s death, jazz in the Soviet Union gradually gained popularity again as happened in the 1920s. Soviet musicians had opportunities to travel abroad to acquire foreign effects and took recordings back to Russia.

In 1956, Kapustin entered the Moscow Conservatory under Alexander Goldenweiser (1875-1961), who was regarded as one of the most renowned pedagogues in the USSR. His prestigious pupils included Tatiana Nikolayeva, Nodar Gabunia, Grigory Ginzburg, Lazar Berman, Dmitry Bashkurov, Samuil Feinberg and many others. Nodar Gabunia (1933-2000) and Kapustin were the first in USSR to learn Bartok’s Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion. It was ready for play at one of Goldenweiser’s student concerts, but the performance was cancelled on the orders from Rector Sveshnikov. After a scandal, the Bartok was performed at the next class recital. In spite of the teacher’s fame, Kapustin made his point that Goldenweiser did not give much as a teacher due to his old age. Nevertheless, Kapustin recognized that Goldenweiser told him many things associated with famous Russian musical figures that people could not know from books, which gave him valuable knowledge and information. Kapustin explained:

I went to him when I was 18. He was a very interesting person – he remembered Rachmaninov and Medtner, so it was very interesting to speak with him. But as a teacher he gave nothing, because he was very old – he was already 81.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Anderson, 94.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

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The Sixth International Festival of Youth and Students was held in Moscow in 1957. This event made a great contribution to enable jazz in the Soviet Union, largely due to the government's support. The Russian government wanted to overturn Stalin's antiforeign legacy and they paid for the bandleader Juri Saulsky to recruit Moscow's great jazz musicians, involving Kapustin. During the festival, Kapustin's Concertino for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 1, which was considered his first piece with real jazz character, was premiered and he performed as the soloist. Although Kapustin thought this concertino was a bit rough, he began to include it in his formal list of compositions after this performance. Saulsky's ensemble won the first prize. Nevertheless, conservative critics attacked the jazz band for misrepresenting Soviet culture.<sup>12</sup> At that period, Kapustin had his own jazz quintet (including a tenor saxophone, trombone, bass and drums) and they played at the restaurant "National" for several months. However, he only played inside for one month since he had to spend more time for his diploma at the Conservatory.

The main feature of Soviet jazz in the post-Stalin era was its emphasis on improvisation.<sup>13</sup> Also at this time, Kapustin started to learn improvisational skills. Because the quintet members were capable of improvising well, Kapustin learned it quickly, but was not very interested in it. Kapustin explained: "I have very few jazz compositions that are really jazz. There is no need to improvise with my music, although it is jazz. But you can make improvisation only by creation; you cannot make an improvisation of a sonata." Then he went on to explain: "I'm not interested in improvisation – and what is a jazz musician without improvisation? But I'm not interested

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<sup>12</sup> Starr, S. Frederick. *Red and hot : the fate of jazz in the Soviet Union, 1917-1980*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983, 249-250.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 251.

because it's not perfect.”<sup>14</sup> As an experienced, classically trained musician, Kapustin believed his music placed more emphasis on the structural considerations rather than the autonomy of jazz.

Kapustin graduated from Moscow Conservatory in 1961, then he took part in Oleg Lundstrem's Big Band with his First Concerto for piano and orchestra, making a performance tour in the Soviet Union for eleven years. Lundstrem's Big Band is the oldest surviving jazz orchestra in Russia at present. In those years, Kapustin consolidated his jazz knowledge and composed many works for piano or orchestra. He finished his first seventeen pieces, mainly for orchestra or big band.

Throughout the 1970s, jazz musicians believed jazz, like the arts in general, would never completely get rid of the Soviet government control. Therefore, many of Jewish musicians immigrated to the United States. Kapustin made use of being a legitimate musician since his career was not regarded as an independent jazz musician. In 1972, Kapustin finished his tour with the Lundstrem Big Band and participated in Vadim Lyudvikovsky's Television and Radio Light Orchestra until 1977. Then he joined the State Cinematography Symphony Orchestra from 1977 to 1984. Kapustin devoted his career mostly to composing instead of performing after he performed his Piano Concerto No. 2 in 1980. He commented, “The more productive period in my life began when I stopped playing with orchestra. So I became completely free as a composer only in 1984, although even before I composed quite a few pieces.”<sup>15</sup> In the meantime, he made numerous recordings of his own music.

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<sup>14</sup> Anderson, 96.

<sup>15</sup> Abramova, 2.

At present, Kapustin lives in Moscow and is over eighty years old. As of 2016, he had composed 161 works with opus numbers. His educational background in classical music and personal fascination with jazz enabled him to delve into a new musical style. In order to further explore how Kapustin took advantage of classical influences and jazz idioms, I will make efforts to explore the stylistic connections between various examples of his piano works. I have selected the Eight Concert Etudes Op. 40, for this study since these short pieces represent his emulation of jazz models.

## **II. Stylistic Influences and Jazz Techniques in the Eight Concert Etudes, Op. 40**

Nikolai Kapustin incorporated multiple elements of traditional technique with jazz style. However, he was not the only composer to combine classical traditions with jazz idioms. There have been many other composers who synthesized the two distinct styles together. Before Kapustin, many others including Maurice Ravel's Piano Concerto in G major, which was largely influenced by jazz. In 1924, George Gershwin composed *Rhapsody in Blue*, which represented the synthesis of classical music and jazz effects. Also, Darius Milhaud's *La creation du monde* displayed the utilization of jazz elements. Milhaud used the piano to provide the rhythmic support and alto saxophone to replace the viola. Compared with the other composers, Kapustin synthesizes these two styles smoothly and makes them to be an integrated style. Kapustin's technical writing and harmonic usage are largely influenced by jazz.

The Eight Concert Etudes, Op. 40 (1984) are considered representative of Kapustin's mature style, which displays not only musical lyricism but also energetic character. These etudes catch multiple musical idioms, ranging from standard virtuosity to jazz style. This section

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provides an overview of some classical influences and jazz elements that have emerged in Kapustin's Eight Concert Etudes, Op. 40.

### Stylistic Influences

Since Kapustin's musical training at the Moscow Conservatory, he assimilated both the formal and technical aspects of classical music, ranging from Bach to 20th century music. For the genres, Kapustin uses numerous classical genres, such as sonata, etude, prelude and fugue, toccata, rhapsody, nocturne, etc. He also applies traditional forms, such as sonata-allegro, rondo, binary, ternary, variations and many more. In fact, Kapustin explained the jazz forms were not attractive to him. He said, "For me the classical part is more important. The jazz style is there to give color – I don't like jazz 'forms' – if you can describe them as that – which is why I've adopted those from classical music."<sup>16</sup>

Kapustin studied classical formal structures at the Moscow Conservatory. Throughout his works, he indeed applied classical structures to his music. For instance, the arrangement of stylized dance movements of Kapustin's *Suite in the Old Style*, Op. 28, is obviously inspired by the keyboard suites and partitas of J.S. Bach, including allemande, gavotte, sarabande, bourée and gigue. They are all in binary forms, which is also the same structure as the baroque dance movements. One of his masterworks, *Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues*, Op. 82, is another example showing the influence of baroque structures. Among this set, Kapustin assimilates multiple contrapuntal techniques such as canon, imitation and inversion. Moreover, his *Eight Concert Etudes*, Op. 40, represent the impact of romantic composers such as Chopin, Liszt, Rachmaninoff and Scriabin through their virtuosic writing. The other set *Twenty-Four Preludes*,

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<sup>16</sup> Smith, Harriet. "Bridging the Divide: An Interview with Kapustin". *International Piano Quarterly* (2000): 55.

Op. 53 reveals the influence of Chopin's and Scriabin's prelude sets as well. It consists of short pieces and each one in a single specific idea. They are written in all major and minor keys.

It is worth mentioning that the sonata form is Kapustin's favorite. So far, he has composed twenty piano sonatas. Kapustin has demonstrated that he is no stranger to the sonata form and its established developmental model.<sup>17</sup> He employs sonata-allegro form in most of the first movements of his sonatas and the Sonatina, Op. 100. Like the sonata form of classical era, Kapustin's sonata-allegro form has clear statement of themes. Besides, he also uses complicated development, which features the character of romantic era sonata form. For his shorter pieces such as the Etudes and Preludes, he incorporated multiple elements of traditional technique, such as standard virtuosity found in the etudes of Chopin and Liszt and traditional ABA forms.

Apart from his inheritance of traditional formal structures, Kapustin's works display the classical virtuosic pianism as well. In the Eight Concert Etudes, Op. 40, the technical virtuosity shows the influence of 19<sup>th</sup> century etude writing, especially Chopin's two sets of etudes, Op. 10 and Op. 25. Kapustin's resembles those in that each of his eight etudes shows a variety of different technical problems, some etudes represent strength requirement, while others display fluent and lyrical character.

The influence of Chopin's works may reveal in Kapustin's second etude of the set, which is written in traditional ABA form. This etude reflects both Chopin's lyricism and technical writing. The continuing double-note texture may have been inspired by Chopin's Op. 10, No. 7 (see example 2.1). Compared with Chopin's double notes, Kapustin's etude sounds more moderate but still hard, double sixths and double thirds alternate continuously. Moreover, Kapustin uses

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<sup>17</sup> Creighton, 79.

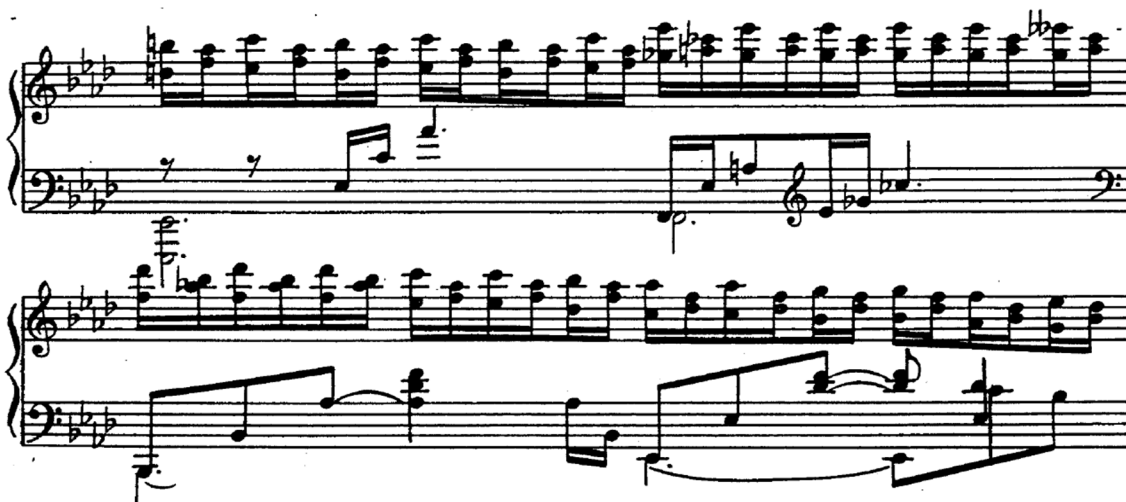


the larger intervals on the strong beats but Chopin applies them on the weaker beats, which makes Kapustin's etude more difficult since the pianists should both bring out the melodic line with their fifth fingers and avoid playing with accents. For the left hand, Kapustin also adds more variety to the accompaniment than Chopin's (see example 2.2). Besides Chopin, Rachmaninoff employed this difficult figuration of alternating double notes in his Prelude Op. 23, No. 9 as well, which may also affect Kapustin's composition (see example 2.3). Compared with Chopin and Kapustin, Rachmaninoff applies alternating double notes with more flexibility, changing between double thirds, fourths, fifths and more. In addition, he also uses the larger intervals on the strong beats.

Example 2.1 Chopin: Etude Op. 10, No. 7, mm. 14-19.

The image shows a musical score for Chopin's Etude Op. 10, No. 7, measures 14-19. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a complex right-hand melody with many triplets and a left-hand accompaniment of alternating double notes. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5. The word "delicato" is written above the first measure of the second system. The piece ends with a repeat sign and a fermata.

Example 2.2 Kapustin: Etude No. 2, Op. 40, mm. 17-18.



Example 2.3 Rachmaninoff: Prelude Op. 23, No. 9, mm. 3-4.



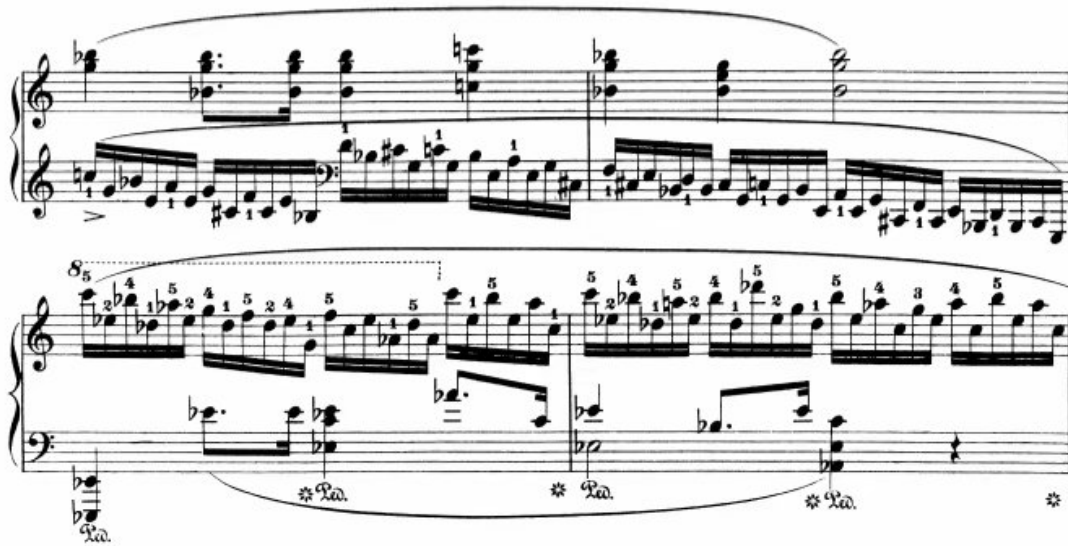
In this etude set, beyond the second etude, Kapustin likewise uses continuing thirds in the etude No. 7 (see example 2.4).

Example 2.4 Kapustin: Etude No. 7, Op. 40, mm. 72-73.



The romantic influence also can be seen in the fourth etude, “Reminiscene,” which features a typical nineteenth-century virtuosic writing that should be switching fast running notes between two hands. The similar figuration displays in Chopin’s Op 25, No. 11, “Winter Wind”. It is a study for the rotational technique of fast notes. In some places, Chopin switches technical difficulty from the right hand to the left hand, and then back to the right hand again (see example 2.5). This writing style also shows in Kapustin’s fourth and eighth etudes (see example 2.6 and 2.7). In the fourth etude, besides the technical emphasis, the melodic line played by the right hand represents lyrical and expressive character. It may come from Bellini’s *bel canto* style, which largely influences Chopin’s works as well.

Example 2.5 Chopin: Etude Op. 25, No. 11, mm. 43-46.



Example 2.6 Kapustin: Etude No. 4, Op. 40, mm. 22-25.

This musical score consists of four systems of piano music. The first system shows a treble and bass staff with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 2/4 time signature. The treble staff features a complex, rapid melodic line with many accidentals, while the bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment. A dashed line with the number '8' above it spans the first two measures of the treble staff. The second system continues the melodic development in the treble staff, with the bass staff providing a steady accompaniment. The third system shows a change in the bass staff's accompaniment, with a 'mf' (mezzo-forte) dynamic marking. The fourth system concludes the passage with a final melodic flourish in the treble staff and a sustained accompaniment in the bass staff.

Example 2.7 Kapustin: Etude No. 8, Op. 40, mm. 105-112.

This musical score consists of two systems of piano music. The first system shows a treble and bass staff with a key signature of three flats (Bb, Eb, Ab) and a 2/4 time signature. The treble staff features a melodic line with many accidentals, while the bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment. The second system continues the melodic development in the treble staff, with the bass staff providing a steady accompaniment. The score concludes with a final melodic flourish in the treble staff and a sustained accompaniment in the bass staff.

In the third etude of Op. 40, “Toccatina”, the repeated notes pattern may recall some of Scarlatti’s repeated notes (see example 2.8 and 2.9). Furthermore, Kapustin incorporates repeated notes with contrapuntal texture, which is similar figuration to Ravel’s Toccata from *Le tombeau de Couperin* (see example 2.10).

Example 2.8 Domenico Scarlatti: Keyboard Sonata in D minor, K. 141, mm. 1-5.



Example 2.9 Kapustin: Etude No. 3, Op. 40, mm. 7-10.



Example 2.10 Ravel: *Le tombeau de Couperin*, Toccata, mm. 173-177.



Due to Kapustin's educational background, his music shows the influence of classical composers as well as his respect for them. He utilizes the classical traditions to provide the basis of his music, while he also employs jazz styles to add colorful sound, which creates his own unique musical world.

### Jazz Techniques

There are several jazz musicians influencing Kapustin's works, but the main impact comes from two jazz musicians, Oscar Peterson (1925-2007) and Art Tatum (1925-1956). The Canadian jazz musician Peterson is regarded as one of the greatest jazz pianists, and he is famous for his remarkable pianistic virtuosity and consistent swing. Kapustin said, "He's No. 1 for me."<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Peterson's jazz style was greatly influenced by American jazz pianist Art Tatum. Kapustin's music shares one of the stylistic traits of both predecessors, perpetual motion with virtuoso passagework and rhythmic intensity.<sup>19</sup>

In the stylistic transition from ragtime to jazz, the foremost transforming element was the growing sense of movement and freedom, wherein the left hand gradually took on more linear

<sup>18</sup> Smith, 55.

<sup>19</sup> Choi, Jiwon. *An Eclectic Combination of Classical and Jazz Idioms: Nikolai Kapustin's Piano Works*. DMA thesis, University of Kansas, 2015, 10.

aspects such as walking tenths and octaves and melodic runs.<sup>20</sup> The right hand gradually prefers to play more freely rather than simply reading the given ragtime melodies. This new musical trend brought the increasing usage of swing feel, which displayed swinging eighth notes and flexible rhythm. Pianists used a more unconstrained method to explore rhythm by playing before or behind the beat, and it often emerged in the bass melody played by the left hand or bass instrument. This is a current characteristic of jazz music. Kapustin's music utilizes these elements of jazz and synthesizes them with his classical writing style. The following part will identify some standard jazz techniques used in the Eight Etudes.

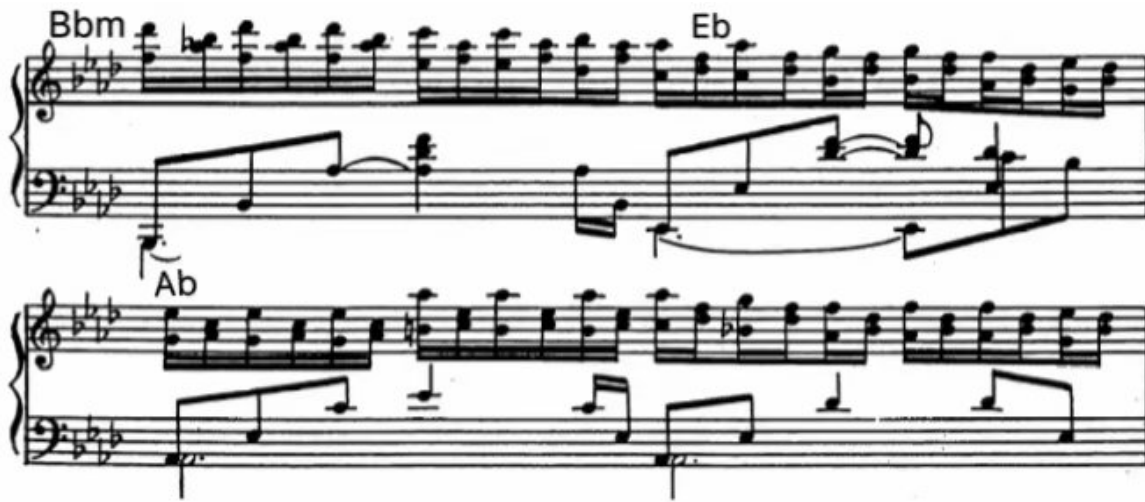
a. The ii-V Progression

From the late 1920s to 1950s, the harmony of Vaudeville and Broadway's popular song influenced the formation of the fundamental jazz form and harmony. This standard jazz harmony is strongly tonal and the basic component is the ii-V progression. The function of the ii-V progression is establishing a key center and regarded as a medium for modulation. In diatonic music, this progression is often used in the circle of fifths motion and towards a key center. An example can be found in Kapustin's Etude No. 2, Op. 40 (see example 2.11). In this passage, he employs the ii-V progression to lead to the tonic, A-flat major.

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<sup>20</sup> Kernfeld, Barry. *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*. London: Macmillan, 2002, vol. 3, 282.

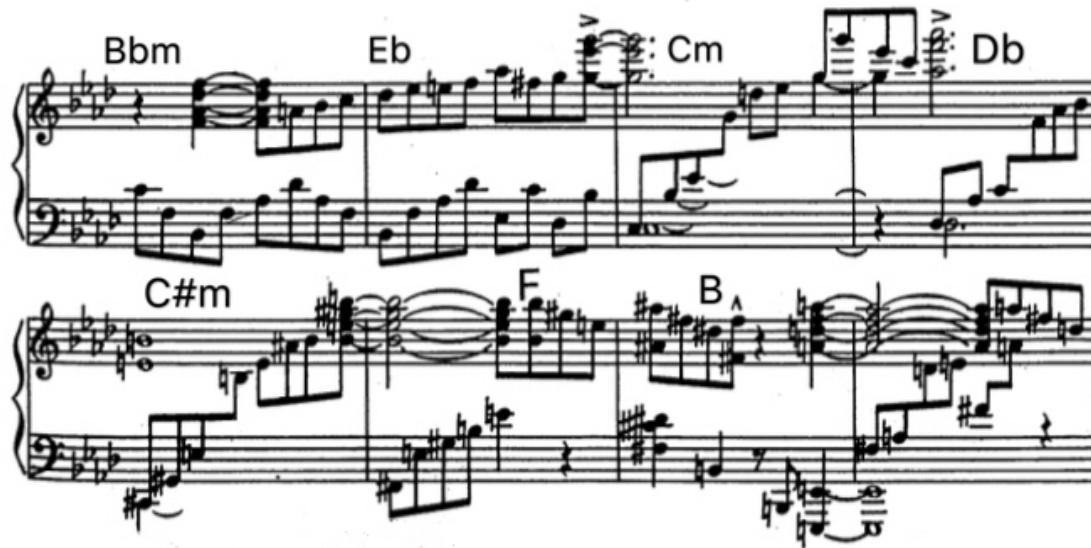
Example 2.11 Kapustin: Etude No. 2, Op. 40, mm. 18-19.



Besides facilitating the establishment of a key center, Kapustin also utilizes the ii-V progression for promoting modulation (see example 2.12). The following example comes from his Etude No. 8. In this example, Kapustin uses ii-V motion to modulate from A-flat major to B major, which is a distant key for A-flat major. Starting from measure 33, the Bb minor and Eb major chords are built on the scale degrees ii and V of A-flat major. The tonality of A-flat major proceeds to measure 36 in Db. In measure 37, Kapustin cleverly moves enharmonically from Db major to C# minor, the ii chord in B major.



Example 2.12 Kapustin: Etude No. 8, Op. 40, mm. 33-40.



#### b. Tritone Substitutions

Tritone Substitution chords are another common jazz harmonic progression. A tritone substitution chord is used to substitute a dominant seventh chord whose root is a tritone away from the substituted chord. This progression runs smoothly since it keeps the original tritone. This technique was first pioneered and used extensively by Dizzy Gillespie in the 1940s.<sup>21</sup> Kapustin uses tritone substitution chords in many of his Eight Etudes.

In the first etude from Op. 40, Kapustin uses tritone substitution chords in the second theme (see example 2.13). He substitutes a G major chord with a Db major chord instead of simply using the dominant chord of C major to further confirm the key center, since this etude doesn't begin with the tonic key. Kapustin utilizes this technique to make the audience feel surprised.

<sup>21</sup> Wang, Ruby. Fusion of classical virtuosity and jazz techniques in the etudes of Nikolai Kapustin: Eight Concert Etudes, Op. 40 and Five Etudes in Different Intervals, Op. 68. DMA thesis, University of South Carolina, 2014, 37.

Example 2.13 Kapustin: Etude No. 1, Op. 40, mm. 12-15.

Another example can be found in the Etude No. 3, measures 31-34. In the following passage, Kapustin substitutes D chord with an Ab chord rather than starting a circle of fifths motion with the following chords (see example 2.14).

Example 2.14 Kapustin: Etude No. 3, Op. 40, mm. 31-34.

### c. Boogie-Woogie

Kapustin recalls his first memory of jazz: “At first my friends and I could hear jazz on the radio ... at that time what we liked most was boogie-woogie.”<sup>22</sup> Boogie-woogie is a popular style that contributed to the development of jazz. It is chiefly associated with dancing, and defined by the *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* as being “...characterized by the use of blues chord progressions combined with a forceful, repetitive left-hand bass figure.”<sup>23</sup> The walking bass line plays an important role in the boogie-woogie. It is frequently based on eighth notes that reflect the distinct boogie-woogie rhythm. In general, compared with bass lines played by the left hand, the right hand usually plays melodic lines freer for improvisatory character. Furthermore, although the walking bass line has many different patterns, there are two main types used by composers.

The first type is using strong chord tones on downbeats. Kapustin utilizes this pattern in his seventh etude from Op. 40 (see example 2.15). In the following example, the bass line consists of eighth notes and gives the music a steady feeling. Compared with the bass line, the melody of the right hand is more complicated. In the measure 84, the melodic rhythm alternates between triplets and two sixteenth notes, and Kapustin adds the irregular accents to the melody. It creates the sense of swing.

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<sup>22</sup> Mann, 12

<sup>23</sup> Creighton, 46.

Example 2.15 Kapustin: Etude No. 7, Op. 40, mm. 84-85.



The other pattern of walking bass lines is playing with arpeggiation. It also can be found in the etude set (see example 2.16). In the Etude No. 8, measures 93-100, the left hand plays with eighth notes in the broken F minor chord. The right hand plays the chords on the weak beats, which creates the contrast with the steady bass.

Example 2.16 Kapustin: Etude No. 8, Op. 40, mm. 93-100.



#### d. Rhythmic Syncopation and Swing

Syncopation and swing form the basic rhythmic structure of jazz. It is widely known that rhythmic syncopation is used in jazz, which puts the accents on the notes between the beats

instead of accents directly on the beat. This rhythmic treatment breaks the original flowing rhythm, which makes a special effect to music. The following examples represent Kapustin employing syncopation in his etudes (see example 2.17 and 2.18).

Example 2.17 Kapustin: Etude No. 1, Op. 40, mm. 4-9.



Example 2.18 Kapustin: Etude No. 6, Op. 40, mm. 15-16.



In example 2.17, Kapustin combines the materials of both hands to create the syncopation effect, such as the fourth beat in measure 4. The syncopated rhythm created by the accent chord of the right hand, B-flat major chord and note G of the left hand. The example 2.18 represents Kapustin uses syncopation in the soprano melodic line, which plays on the weak beats. Moreover,

he creates an illusion of the melodic notes played by the right hand in measure 15 are grouped in three, which makes it against with the group of four sixteenth notes in the meter 4/4. A syncopated feeling is created by the cross-rhythm between the two upper voices.

Swing is a rhythmic style set up in the late 1920s after boogie-woogie. The swing rhythm usually displays unequal subdivision of the quarter note, often based on triplets. They can be called swing eighths since the eighths are played unevenly. Occasionally, swing eighths not only can be marked as eighth-note triplets with a tie between the first two notes, but also notated as dotted-eighth and sixteenth notes. Composers rarely notate swing eighths in scores. However, a more common way is to point out the swing rhythm of the equal eighth notes. Kapustin clearly notates “Swinging” in several places of his Preludes, but never indicates this in his etudes of Op. 40. The valuable information is that the notated swinging passages of triplets mostly display with dotted-eighth and sixteenth notes.

Generally speaking, swing and syncopation are deeply connected together because they both emphasize the weaker pulse. Example 2.19 demonstrates Kapustin’s usage of swing and syncopation in his seventh etude (see example 2.19).

Example 2.19 Kapustin: Etude No. 7, Op. 40, mm. 1-5.



In this example, the right hand plays with a quarter-note triplet followed by an eighth-note triplet on the second beat, whereas the left hand plays triplets with tied eighth notes. In addition, Kapustin notates the dotted-eighth and sixteenth notes on the third beat of measure 1 to show the characteristic of swing as well. The usage of accents on the weak beats also represents Kapustin's writing of syncopation.

#### e. Jazz Chord Voicing

In the classical era, composers used seventh chords to add tension and direction to the harmonic motion. However, modern jazz musicians rarely utilize the chords with the same function since they prefer to add further extensions to the chords, which represent 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, as well as chromatic alterations. The term “upper structures” is often used to define these extensions in jazz theory. For the purpose of using these extensive chords, jazz composers often omit some of the basic chord notes. The composers want to make the voice leading smoothly and

inner voices chromatically. In addition, jazz chord voicing is frequently played with both hands because they span widely instead of simply voicing in stacked thirds.

Kapustin uses many extension chords with chromatic alterations in the following example, which comes from the second etude of Op. 40 (see example 2.20). In this passage, Kapustin utilizes chromatic voice leading in both upper and inner voices. For the upper voice, the melodic line is F-E-F in measure 1 and Eb-D-Eb in measure 2. Then Kapustin also employs two progressions of chromatic voice leading in the inner voices in measure 3, Fb-Eb and Cb-C, and the upper voice features D-Eb at the same time. Besides this passage, such chromaticism emerges throughout this second etude.

Example 2.20 Kapustin: Etude No. 2, Op. 40, mm. 1-3.

**Moderato** (♩ = 92)

**Bbm7** **Bbm7 (b5)**

**Eb13** **Eb11 (b5)**

**Fb/Ab** **Ab** **Fm7**



There is no doubt that Kapustin's etude set Op. 40 integrates classical traditions with standard jazz techniques. For purpose of facilitating a deeper understanding of Kapustin's musical language, it is necessary to have a comprehensive study of stylistic influences and jazz idioms found in his works. The research process in this section will help to explore the specific pieces from Kapustin's Op. 40 in the next section.

### **III. A Closer Study in Etudes No. 1 and No. 6 of Op. 40**

This section provides two case studies, exploring more closely some of the disparate characteristics and technical elements already mentioned in Kapustin's Etudes No. 1 and No. 6 of Op. 40. This specific study will promote a deeper knowledge of Kapustin's compositional style.

#### Etude No. 1, "Prelude"

The first etude is titled "Prelude", which displays an introductory showpiece to begin the etude set. This etude features a variety of harmonic and rhythmic jazz elements. Overall, the first etude is tonal in C major and based on two distinct themes. The formal structure can be separated into six sections (see Table 1). According to the following form, there is a short development after sections ABA, and then the previous materials from the first two sections come back again. In other words, this etude features a modified sonata form. Because the structure of this piece is clear and the two themes represent contrasting characteristics, the performance challenge of this etude is to create the overall continuity of the different sections and to understand the connections between each part.

Table 1. Formal Structure of Kapustin: Etude No. 1, Op. 40.

Section A	Theme A mm. 1-8	Transition mm. 9-12	
Section B	Theme B mm. 13-20	Cadential figures mm. 21-27	Theme B mm. 29-34
Section A	Theme A mm. 35-38	Transition mm. 39-40	
Section C	Development mm. 41-56		
Section B	Theme B mm. 57-62		
Section A (coda)	Theme A mm. 63-70		

At the beginning of this etude, although the first theme features a straightforward character, Kapustin uses the dominant sonority of the B-flat major seventh chord to suggest a false key center in E-flat major. This tonal ambiguity continues throughout the first section. Until the end of measure 12, Kapustin inserts an accented G eleventh chord, and then resolves to C major in measure 13. This is the first time the piece arrives at the real tonal center. The first section functions like an introduction, which helps to establish the key center.

In the first section, another notable aspect is the bass line, which is important for the organization of the first theme. The first theme can be divided into sequences of two-measure

groups. For the purpose of creating the sense of continuity, the bass line displays a stepwise descending motion throughout the whole section. Kapustin starts with A-flat in the bass from measures 1-4, then G throughout measures 5-7, F-sharp in measure 8, quickly followed by F in measures 9-10, then E-flat in measure 11 and D-flat in measure 12. Finally, the bass line reaches C in measure 13, where the second theme begins in the tonic key of C major. This long descending bass line smoothly combines the first two sections together. In performance, because the similar texture repeats several times within the section, it is necessary to bring out the bass line motion as a foundation for the harmonic progression.

As mentioned before, Kapustin cleverly uses the ii-V progression to set up key areas (see example 3.1). The following example represents Kapustin's utilization of this progression in the transition to establish a temporary key in E-flat major.

Example 3.1 Kapustin: Etude No. 1, Op. 40, mm. 7-11.

The image displays a musical score for Example 3.1, which is a piano etude by Nikolai Kapustin. The score is presented in two systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is E-flat major, indicated by two flats (B-flat and E-flat) in the key signature. The first system, measures 7-10, is labeled 'Eb: ii (Fm)' and shows a descending bass line starting on A-flat. The second system, measures 11-13, is labeled 'V (Bb)' and 'I (Eb)', indicating a ii-V-I progression in E-flat major. The bass line continues its stepwise descent, reaching C in measure 13. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings like *mf*.

Then the second section keeps some of the characters from the first section, such as the phrase of two measures and the ascending sixteenth motion. Compared with the first theme, the second theme displays several contrasting features. For example, although the bass line continues a stepwise decent from C-Bb-Ab, it is not persistent. In the first theme, the highest note of the melodic line is the first beat in the second measure. However, the second theme arrives at the top note faster and then features descending motion. As a result, both themes start in a similar manner but then change quickly. In terms of rhythm, the accents push forward the first theme in measure 1, while Kapustin places the peak of the first phrase on the downbeat in measure 2. This downbeat chord in measure 2 helps to stabilize the regular beats. The phrase structure of the second theme is not similar to the first theme since it lacks a determined emotional tone. Furthermore, the left hand plays almost as an accompaniment throughout the first section, while the melody should be played by both hands in the second section. Kapustin alternates similar passagework between two hands, which is a common writing device used in etudes. For example, the melodic line is played by the right hand in measure 23, and then a similar passage emerges in the next measure which is played by the left hand.

Kapustin also employs jazz techniques in the second theme (see example 3.2 and 3.3). In the following example, Kapustin uses the tritone substitution rather than simply using dominant chords to enrich the harmonic variety. Later, Kapustin uses this formula again when the second theme comes back in measures 28-29. He inserts a D-flat chord to substitute the dominant chord, and then resolves to C major where he brings back the second theme.

Example 3.2 Kapustin: Etude No. 1, Op. 40, mm. 12-15.

Example 3.3 Kapustin: Etude No. 1, Op. 40, mm. 26-29.

Although the descending bass line in the second section is not as obvious as the first section, it still continues throughout the second section and then connects to the third section. These are the descending bass notes: C, Bb (measure 13), Ab (measure 14), G (measure 17), F (measure 18), E (measure 20), Eb (measure 21), Db (measure 22), C (measure 23), B (measure 24), A

(measure 25), G (measure 28). The last note G has a dominant function, which leads to the return of the second theme in measure 29. The bass line continues as C-Bb-Ab-G from measures 29-35 when section A is back in the tonic key. Kapustin uses G in the bass in measure 35, and then the descending motion from measures 35-40 towards the tonic C. That means the section C begins with the tonic key.

Due to the continuing usage of the bass descent, listeners may become accustomed to this stepwise motion. Although Kapustin still employs the bass progression of C, Bb, Ab and G started in section C, he stops using it later and tries to bring some new ideas to listeners. Instead of using two-measure groups as the two themes, the phrases are organized by eight-measure groups in the development. From measures 41-48, the rhythmic structure tends to feature a more improvisatory character. However, the stable sense comes back in measure 49 since the left hand changes its role to serve as an accompaniment like its function in the first theme, which provides stable beats.

After that development, Kapustin brings back the second theme in its transformed version. The transformed theme incorporates the driving energy of the first theme because it features a highly rhythmic pattern of sixteenth notes in the bass to provide the energy. In measure 63, the first theme comes back with the home key of C major, and then the momentum stays consistent towards the end.

Kapustin finishes the first etude with statements of the Eb major pentatonic scale, a common element used by jazz musicians. Art Tatum was among the first jazz pianists who incorporated pentatonic scales and runs in the 1930s. In the 1960s, as musicians began

experimenting with harmony, pentatonics became used more chromatically than diatonically.<sup>24</sup> The following example shows the E-flat major pentatonic scale ending used by Kapustin (see example 3.4).

Example 3.4 Kapustin: Etude No. 1, Op. 40, m. 69.



Kapustin creates a sense of continuity in the first etude through the closely connected texture with the inner relationship between the motives. In addition, the continuing bass descent provides forward drive, which also helps to establish the etude as a whole. Distinguishing the contrasts and similarities between the textures of each section will benefit the practice process.

#### Etude No. 6, “Pastoral”

Being one of the most popular etudes in the set of Op. 40, this etude represents different colors than many of Kapustin’s works that feature exploding power. The sixth etude has a clear structure of 32-bar song form with two choruses and a short coda with the materials from the previous section, and the phrases are almost divided into eight-measure groups throughout the whole piece (see Table 2). Although the harmonic progression is straightforward except for a

<sup>24</sup> Wang, 99.

few places, Kapustin keeps the multiple varieties of texture, which always brings new ideas to the audience. Furthermore, the title “Pastoral” just demonstrates some of the characteristics of this etude, such as the simplicity of harmonies and a slightly faster than moderate tempo. However, there are still some elements outside the pastoral style. The following analysis will provide the pastoral and non-pastoral features of this etude, offering how they balance each other through the developing process. The recognition of these features will help pianists to understand the performance practice of this piece.

Table 2. Formal Structure of Kapustin: Etude No. 6, Op. 40.

A	a mm. 1-8 Bb - V	a mm. 9-16 I	b mm. 17-24 ii7	c mm. 25-32 Developing
A'	a mm. 33-40 Bb-V	a mm. 41-48 I	b mm. 49-56 ii7	c mm. 57-62 Developing
Coda (A)	mm. 63-70 Bb			

Compared with the first etude, this piece starts with a clear tonal center, B-flat major (see example 3.5). The first phrase (measures 1-8) features simple harmonic progression since there are only two additional notes outside the B-flat major scale, A-flat in measure 5 and G-flat in



measure 6. The first phrase excellently demonstrates Kapustin's economical usage of motives by applying multiple reharmonizations and repetitions. In addition, the playful character of this etude is also represented through the simplified melody and stable underlying harmony. In the first eight measures, the top melodic line consists of three-note groups and keeps repeated patterns. For example, the soprano line is Bb-D-C-Bb in measure 1, and the melody is D-C-Bb in measure 2. Then in measures 5-6, the melodic line is F-D-C-Bb followed by F-D-C. The repeated pattern helps to bring new colors to the texture rather than restrict it since Kapustin uses a different underlying harmony each time when he uses a single long note, such as the B-flat note from measures 1-5 and the C note in measures 6 and 8. It is worth noting that Kapustin applies accents to these single notes, which also shows that he treats these notes differently. Therefore, when we play the first phrase, we should both pay attention to the top melodic line and the underlying harmony. Another practical difficulty is two hands playing together, and emphasizing the given accents since Kapustin uses the accents on the weak beats. At the beginning, a better way to practice is separating two hands to feel the different rhythmic pulse between the top and bass lines.

Example 3.5 Kapustin: Etude No. 6, Op. 40, mm. 1-2.



The repeated first theme (measures 9-16) is a variation of the original, which features the same melody with a slightly varied accompaniment of sixteenth-note groups. Phrase b consists of two four-measure phrases (see example 3.6). The texture is simpler than before, utilizing A-flat and G-flat notes that emerge in measures 5-6 before. Kapustin continues to use the repetitive quality in phrase b. He varies a motive of four notes spanning a minor third here instead of repeating three notes of a major third in the first phrase. Besides, Kapustin keeps the figure of three notes descending from the first phrase, Ab-Gb-F-Gb in measure 17 and Bb-D-C-Bb in measure 1. In phrase b, Kapustin only uses accents in measures 19 and 23 and prolongs them to the next measure, which helps to establish tension to the next part because of the underlying complicated harmonies. The connection between phrases b and c is reflected in those two measures after the accents (measures 20 and 24) since the sixteenth notes provide energy. Phrase c features a more impetuous character, which is different from the previous materials. For the performance practice, the technical difficulty arises in the texture played by the right hand because the pianist needs to play the top melody clearly and inner voices evenly.

Example 3.6 Kapustin: Etude No. 6, Op. 40, mm. 17-20.



The developing phrase c (measures 25-32) is among the most vibrant passages of the sixth etude (see example 3.7). The basic underlying motion is the perfect fifths descent, which supports the phrase moving forward. The descending motion within this phrase is C#-F#-B-E-A-D-G-C-F. Although this developing phrase features more variety of textural and harmonic changes, Kapustin still keeps some similar places with the previous elements. Phrase c employs the motive of four-note groups, which is the same as phrase b. Furthermore, at the end of the phrase, the texture from the second theme emerges again while still presenting the descending fifth progression. Kapustin combines the elements from both phrases to lead to section A again. Compared with the previous textures, the development features more chromaticism in both melody and inner voices. It is difficult to bring out different melodic lines of the right hand. Besides, the left hand plays with lots of big jumps, so the accuracy is also a big challenge for the pianists.

Example 3.7 Kapustin: Etude No. 6, Op. 40, mm. 25-28.



After the dramatic development, phrases a, b, and c are repeated in the same sequence. However, Kapustin makes some differences of the texture to keep the audience engaged. For example, the returning phrase a and b both include broken octaves for the melodic lines. The development features more dramatic power than before since the melody consists of almost all big chords, providing the most technical challenge within this piece. Both hands should play with wide leaps and the right hand needs to play chords and bring out the top melodic notes at the same time. The materials of the final coda come from the first theme, and then the whole etude finishes in a light and eccentric atmosphere.

Kapustin retains the simplified idea throughout the sixth etude, which offers a pastoral effect. The whole etude can be unified as a whole not only through the similar melodic motives, but also because of the use of accents. At the beginning, Kapustin uses the accents with changing harmonies to bring new ideas to the theme. Then in the second theme, the accents are applied to push forward to connect to the next phrase. Due to the function of these accents, the three phrases are connected together. For the pedagogical value, this etude can practice the rhythmic intensity and the voicing of the contrapuntal texture.

### **Conclusion**

The delicate synthesis of stylistic influences and jazz developments comprises Kapustin's unique musical language. Since his early musical training at Moscow Conservatory included the Russian classical piano conventions, he knew and mastered traditional formal structures and virtuosic pianism very well. Therefore, many of his works represent structural and technical inheritance ranging from baroque to twentieth century music. On the other hand, Kapustin adopts jazz elements in his works as well. His usage of jazz techniques reveals his interest in jazz and he

receives many influences from jazz musicians. In addition, through his working experience with big bands, his harmonic and textural writing became more varied.

The Eight Concert Etudes, Op. 40 reflects Kapustin's absorption of the etude genre and jazz techniques. Although each etude represents different characters and technical demands, the influence of classical virtuosity and jazz style is apparent. The etude set clearly shows not only the technical and formal organization of classical composers and their works, but also the specific jazz elements including multiple harmonic and rhythmic varieties. In order to play these etudes well, the pianist should have both a virtuosic piano technique and comprehensive study of jazz techniques, which is different from playing a classical piece.

Overall, Kapustin's etude set Op. 40 is a valuable work contributing to the piano etude literature. Modern pianists often choose one or more of the eight etudes to perform in piano recital programs or for encores. Besides, the pianists also play these etudes for competitions since it represents both musical and technical aspects. The stylistic fusion of Kapustin's music offers more opportunities for modern pianists to explore a new musical language. His works have become popular outside Russia and are gradually becoming established in the standard repertoire. Through exploring the development of Kapustin's etudes and their disparate styles, one learns the value of knowing his musical vocabulary and interpretation.

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